

Document No. 003

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Auth: DDA Memo. 2 Apr 77  
DDA REG. 77/1783

Date: 07 APR 1978 By: CIL

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP  
INTELLIGENCE REPORT

COUNTRY France/Russia

DATE:

SUBJECT Soviet Religious Controversy in France

INFO. In Text

25X1A6a

DIST. 5 February 1947

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SUPPLEMENT

25X1X6 ORIGIN

1. The Committee on Religious Affairs of the USSR is gravely concerned over the failure of Soviet religious policy in France, source reports, and, since they have ordered a firmer hand in church affairs, it is believed that the Soviets will fight for control of the Metropolitan Church on rue Daru, site of Archbishop Vladimir's headquarters.
2. In 1923 the Russian Orthodox Religious Association was created under the leadership of Archpriest Jacques Smirnov (now deceased), priest of the rue Daru church. This association was created in anticipation of the recognition of the Soviet regime by France. After its creation the Association concluded an agreement with the last Russian Ambassador to France concerning the future judicial situation of the rue Daru church, which until 1923 was the Church of the Russian Embassy.
3. After an exchange of letters, the ambassador wrote and signed a document, 12 June 1923, in which the following was stipulated:

"The Russian Embassy transfers the Embassy Church to the Association for the purpose of preserving this church from representatives of the Soviet ..... As soon as legitimate power is re-established in Russia with the approval of the people, and as soon as this legitimate power establishes contacts with the authorities of the past which were overthrown by the revolution, the agreements which we have concluded will be considered as null and void."

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4. It is probable, source states, that in the case of trial before French courts each of the two parties in question would claim its rights. Vladimir's counsellors would without doubt bring to light the above quoted paragraph, as Vladimir and his clergy are preparing to defend themselves with every weapon. However, Soviet circles in Paris seem hesitant as to the opportuneness of such a trial. In source's opinion they have awaited the organization of the new French Government, since Bogomolov's entourage fears that without a far-leftist government the trial of the rue Daru church might degenerate into a trial in which the accused would be the Soviet Government.

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